PCRs and Policy Influence

What Project Completion Reports Have to Say about Public Policy Influence by Centre-Supported Research

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to review a selection of 75 PCRs from Centre-supported projects, and document what they report about the extent to which and the ways in which Centre-supported research has influenced public policy, in terms of links established between research and policy, the nature and type of policy impact cited, mechanisms or approaches which contributed to policy influence, and factors which facilitated or inhibited policy influence.

The selected PCRs reported three main links established between research and policy. The involvement of policy makers/government officials in the project was the most common link cited: 60% of the selected PCRs clearly state that policy makers, government officials/staff, or political leaders were involved in the project in some fashion, while involvement is implied in 2 PCRs. The dissemination of research results to policy makers/ government officials was also a common link: 49% of the selected PCRs clearly state that research results were disseminated to policy makers/government officials. The establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/ research institutions and policy makers/ government officials was less common than either of the two types of links already mentioned: 29% of the PCRs reported this link. Other links singularly reported include the linking of research and policy through an increased capacity to link research to utilization of results, the use of activities to turn research into policy through training as a project focus, and an orientation towards policy in the project.

The PCRs described a range of policy maker/government official involvement through the various links established between research and policy. The level of involvement as participants in the projects, as recipients of dissemination of research results, and/or as participants in the links established through the project ranged from the international level (11% of the PCRs), to the national level (65%, includes PCRs in which level is unspecified), the state and provincial level (13%), the regional level (3%), and the district, local and municipal levels (21% of the PCRs). Twenty-seven percent of the PCRs reported the involvement of policy makers or policy groups; 33% the involvement of governments and/or government ministries, agencies, institutions, departments or units; 37% the involvement of government officials, officers, representatives or personnel; 17% the involvement of decision makers, authorities, committee members, and/or political leaders, groups or actors; 5% the involvement of planners, programme directors and/or managers; and 4% the involvement of administrators.

Actual policy impact is reported in 33% of the selected PCRs, likely impact in 24%, and potential policy impact in 41% of the PCRs. The most frequent type of policy impact cited was a significant increase in capacity of researchers/research institutions (48% of the PCRs), in such areas as research skills and management and the linking of research to utilization of results. This was followed closely by the use of research

results as inputs into policies/programs, etc. (44%). The aiding of policy makers in policy formulation by the use of an introduced or developed technology was cited in 27% of the PCRs; the possible changing of the thinking and attitudes of policy makers in 11%; the formulation or adoption of new policies in 9%; the establishing/enhancing of good/strong working relations between researchers/research institutions and policy makers/government officials in 7%; and the production of a policy or policy-oriented document report in 3% of the PCRs. Other types of policy impact singularly reported include a change in focus of policies and programs; the strengthening of linkages between research, policy and action; the establishing of new cooperation mechanisms between NGOs and the UN system; and the establishing of communication between researchers and policy makers.

A majority of the selected PCRs (59%) directly relate policy influence to a specific mechanism/approach, while 81% suggest mechanisms/approaches which may influence policy but the actual relationship is not confirmed in the PCR. Mechanisms/ approaches described as contributing to policy influence include the use of the technology developed/ introduced to aid policy makers in policy formulation (20% of the PCRs), the involvement of policy makers in the research (17%), the dissemination of research results to policy makers (17%), and the establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions and policy makers (15%). Other mechanisms/approaches singularly reported were the novelty of the approach used, lobbying, the development of sustainable training programs which contribute to health sector reform, and the project activities.

Fewer PCRs directly attributed the facilitating of policy influence to specific factors (37% of the PCRs), and an even smaller number of the PCRs directly related the inhibiting of policy influence to specific factors (15%); the majority of factors were unconfirmed by the PCRs. Factors found to facilitate policy influence include the involvement of policy makers in the project (17%), the establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/ research institutions and policy makers (15%), the relevance/usefulness of the research results/technology developed (5%), and a number of factors found in individual PCRs ranging from the usefulness of the research to the sustained support by IDRC. Factors found to inhibit policy influence range from political or governmental factors/climate/agenda (7%) to singularly cited factors such as a project approach that focuses on a multi-country thematic topic rather than an individual country study, and a lack of funding.

The discerning of policy influence mechanisms/approaches and factors from PCRs is hindered by the gaps in information found in many PCRs: research users/ultimate beneficiaries involved in the project are not identified or policy makers specifically mentioned in these groups; beneficiaries of research results dissemination or workshop/conference attendees are not identified; and policy influence mechanisms/approaches and factors are not cited or are unconfirmed.

While a complete picture of the extent to which and the ways in which Centre-supported research has influenced public policy cannot be obtained from a review of PCRs due to the lack of specificity of PCRs, PCRs do provide useful information on the mechanisms/approaches and factors which impact on policy influence. The variety of mechanisms/approaches used, and the diversity of facilitating and inhibiting factors affecting policy influence, both directly stated and suggested by the PCRs which were a part of this review, reveal the complexity of the public policy influence issue. A change in the design of the PCRs to include more specific questions in terms of policy influence can only aid in increasing knowledge of the effecting of policy influence, which should lead in the future to the design of more efficacious interventions.

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**If interested, Annex 1, 2, and 3 are available in hard copy and electronically from the Evaluation Unit.*

TABLES

BOXES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Unit is currently developing a strategic evaluation of the influence of Centre-supported research on policy. As part of the planning for the strategic evaluation, the Evaluation Unit has commissioned a review of Project Completion Reports (PCRs). The purpose of this study was to review a selection of PCRs from Centre-supported projects, and document what they report about the extent to which and the ways in which Centre-supported research has influenced public policy.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Unit selected 100 PCRs from IDRC's PCR database for analysis. These were all PCRs completed between 1996-2001, for which information was filled in for the field 8d, i.e. "areas in which the project can reasonably be expected to have a significant, positive development impact, especially Public Policy." Time constraints, however, necessitated limiting analysis to 75 of the selected PCRs (listed in Annex 1). The 25 PCRs not included in this study were selected out from the PCRs not yet analyzed based on the quality and quantity of the information they contained in terms of policy impact/influence in response to question 8d. The PCRs included in this study were completed between 1997 and 2001: 11 were completed in 2001, 12 in 2000, 13 in 1999, 36 in 1998, and 3 in 1997.

PCRs were reviewed to identify (i) the range of ways in which Centre-supported projects have made links between research and public policy; are said to have influenced public policy or contributed towards policy influence; and are said to be likely to influence public policy; and (ii) how, by what means, or using what mechanisms or approaches, the projects have reportedly influenced or contributed to influencing policy. While information was gleaned from the entire PCR, certain questions were deemed to be particularly relevant to the issue of public policy influence:

- #1- *Please list and comment on all project objectives*;
- #3 - *Please indicate the areas in which people other than the research team were involved in this project*;
- #6d - *Please indicate the overall impact that the project has had or can reasonably be expected to have on enhancing the capacity of recipient individuals & institutions in the following areas: capacity to link research to utilization of research results*;
- #8 - *Please indicate the areas in which the project can reasonably be expected to have a significant, positive development impact*, especially a - *Utilization of Results*, c - *Social Service*, d - *Public Policy*, j - *Governance*, m - *Environmental and Resource Management*, n - *Employment*, o - *Economic Productivity*, p - *Community Process*, r - *Other Development Impacts*, and s - *Overall Notes*;

- #14 - *What impact did external factors have on the management of this project*;
- #16 - *From your experience what recommendations can you provide in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future IDRC support*;
- #17 - *Do you feel that an evaluation of this project would contribute significantly to IDRC's corporate knowledge*;
- #18 - *All in all, do you consider this project a worthwhile investment of IDRC funding;* and
- #19 - *Finally, please note any aspects of the project which you feel should be recorded or emphasized but which have not been covered in other sections of the Project Completion Report*.

The information collected for each PCR is presented in table format in Annex 2 of this report. PCRs are organized according to (i) thematic area: social and economic equity, environmental and natural resource management, and information and communication technologies; and (ii) within each thematic area, by region: Asia/South East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa/Sub-Saharan Africa/West Africa, North Africa/the Middle East, and Global. Each table contains:

- the thematic area the project fits in;
- project number and title;
- country/countries (or region, if country is unknown) in which the project took place;
- any links established between research and policy;
- any policy impact, and/or likely and/or potential policy influence;
- the types of policy impact cited;
- mechanisms or approaches that were used that contributed to policy influence;
- factors facilitating policy influence;
- factors inhibiting policy influence; and
- any notable gaps in information in the PCR about influence of the research on policy.

A major problem encountered early on in an examination of the PCRs was the lack of specificity about policy influence. Policy impact is often not described in terms of being actual or likely, but rather is phrased in such a way that it is more accurate to describe it as potential. Consequently, in this report policy impact is described as actual , i.e. as having occurred; likely, i.e. is expected to occur; and potential, i.e. is possible or may occur. The majority of the PCRs do not directly attribute policy influence or a lack of the same to specific mechanisms/ approaches and factors. As a result, much of the information presented in the tables and used in the analysis is ambiguous or unconfirmed in terms of its actual relation to policy influence, and is acknowledged as such throughout this report. An exception is the category 'links established between research and policy': the ambiguity of information included in this category is not

pointed out in the tables as links between research and policy are less subjective than policy influence mechanisms/approaches and factors.

Given the ambiguity of many of the PCRs in terms of policy influence, the type of information entered in the various table categories is based on examples set out in this study's Terms of Reference, and other elements which the author has concluded may factor into policy influence. The types of information used as the basis for determining the establishing of links between research and policy include: the inclusion of policy makers or government officials in the project, the dissemination of research results to these groups, and the establishing of links between researchers and policy makers. Types of policy impact include: the actual formulation of new policy, the use of project results as inputs into policy; the facilitation of policy formulation by policy makers through the use of an introduced technology, the request by a ministry for researchers to prepare a policy document on the research, the establishing of good working relations between policy makers and researchers, and the gaining of greater capacity by a research institution or researchers to present research results to policy makers. The analytical categories used to determine the mechanisms or approaches that contributed to policy influence include: the participation of policy makers in the project, the dissemination of research results to government officials, the establishing of links between researchers and policy makers, and the establishment of information/ communications systems that may enable researchers to influence policy. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between mechanisms or approaches that contribute to policy influence, and factors facilitating policy influence. Consequently, many of the same examples have been included under both categories. Factors considered to facilitate policy influence include the involvement of policy makers in the project, the establishing of links between government officials and researchers, the revision of a policy by the government when the researchers made research results available to them, the timeliness of the research, and the relevance of the research to policy makers. Factors considered to inhibit policy influence include a lack of involvement of policy makers in the project, the failure to disseminate research results, and external factors such as the political climate.

It also must be noted that some PCRs have gaps in the material they contain, which limits the usability of the information for analysis. Some PCRs have very few comments in answer to the questions deemed to be of particular relevance to the subject of policy influence (listed above). In cases where only boxes are checked or comments are made which do not directly relate to policy influence, the information is not included in this study. This particularly applies to question #6d -- the overall impact that the project has had or can reasonably be expected to have on enhancing the capacity of recipient individuals & institutions in the capacity to link research to utilization of research results.

A second area of the PCR where lack of elaboration is a problem is project outputs (question #5). Most of the PCRs contain lists of published materials; few mention if

policy makers or government officials received or had access to these materials. Although journal articles, books, etc. may have an important impact on policy by influencing policy makers, it cannot be assumed that policy makers received, read or were influenced by these materials unless the PCR so states; hence this policy influence mechanism is not included in the tables or analysis. Likewise, a number of PCRs state that conferences or workshops were held but do not identify the attendees. Mention may or may not be made of this in the report, depending on whether the PCR contains other information related to public policy.

In Annex 3, the information described in each table category is summarized by thematic area, primarily for ease of analysis, rather than comparison of the three thematic areas. The mechanisms/approaches contributing to policy influence and the factors facilitating/inhibiting policy influence are organized according to the nature of policy impact (i.e., actual, likely or potential), and in cases where the policy impact is of a multiple nature, the mechanisms/approaches and factors are organized according to the highest degree of certainty of impact (i.e., actual, then likely, then potential). In the cases where the PCRs actually attribute policy influence to a specific mechanism/approach or factor, the relevant PCR quote is included.

Policy impact/influence information is synthesized across the set of selected PCRs in Section 3.0 of this report, where recurring trends are highlighted. Gaps in information are described in Section 4.0.

3.0 TRENDS ACROSS PCRS

3.1 LINKS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY

The PCRs included in this review described a number of links that were established between research and policy:

- the involvement of policy makers/government officials in the project in varying degrees;
- the dissemination of research results to policy makers/government officials;
- the establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions and policy makers;
- the linking of a graduate school and institutions involved in policy making;
- the linking of research and decision makers, and possibly the research and a state formal education system;
- the linking of research institutions and government institutions, NGOs and the UN system;
- the linking of research and policy through an increased capacity to link research to utilization of results;

- the use of activities to turn research into policy through training as a project focus; and
- an orientation towards policy in the project.

Of the links established between research and policy, the involvement of policy makers/government officials in the project was the most common link: 60% of the selected PCRs (n=45) clearly state that policy makers, government officials/staff, or political leaders were involved in the project in some fashion, while involvement is implied in 2 PCRs. Policy maker involvement is unclear in 36% of the PCRs (n=27), while no policy makers were involved in 1 of the projects.

The dissemination of research results to policy makers/government officials was also a common link: 49% of the selected PCRs (n=37) clearly state that research results were disseminated to policy makers/government officials. Dissemination is unclear or not cited in 49% of the PCRs (n=37), while no dissemination to policy makers occurred in 1 of the projects.

The establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions and policy makers/ government officials was less common in the selected PCRs than either of the two types of links already mentioned. Twenty-nine percent of the PCRs (n=22) reported this link, while in 72% of the PCRs (n=54) this link was not described.

Three other types of links were reported: the linking of research and policy through an increased capacity to link research to utilization of results (n=1), the use of activities to turn research into policy through training as a project focus (n=1), and an orientation towards policy in the project (n=1).

TABLE 1 LINKS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY

	Number (%) of PCRs reporting link	Number (%) of PCRs in which link is unclear or not described	Number (%) of PCRs in which link did not occur
Involvement of policy makers/ government officials in the project	47 (63%)*	27 (36%)	1 (1%)
Dissemination of results to policy makers/government officials	37 (49%)	37 (49%)	1 (1%)
Establishing/strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions/the research and policy makers/government officials/ government institutions	22 (29%)	54 (72%)	0
Increased capacity to link research to utilization of results	1 (1 %)	74 (99%)	0
Activities to turn research into policy through training	1 (1%)	74 (99%)	0
Policy-oriented project	1 (1%)	74 (99%)	0
Total # of PCRs	75	75	75

(*Includes both direct and implied links)

3.1.1 LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

The selected PCRs described a range of policy maker/government official involvement through the various links established between research and policy. The level of involvement as participants in the projects, as recipients of dissemination of research results, and/or as participants in the links established through the project ranged from the international level (11%, n=8), to the national level (65%, n=49; this category also contains the PCRs in which level is unspecified), the state and provincial level (13%, n=10), the regional level (3%, n=2), and the district, local and municipal levels (21%, n=16):

international level

- policy makers from international organizations (n=6, 8%); and
- decision makers (n=3, 4%);

national level (includes level not specified)

- policy makers/groups (n=14,19%);
- government ministries/agencies/institutions (n=17, 23%);
- government officials/officers/representatives/personnel (n=23, 31%);
- decision makers (n=8, 11%);
- authorities (n=2, 3%);
- political groups/actors (n=2, 3%);
- planners/programme directors/managers (n=2, 3%); and
- administrators (n=2, 3%);

state/provincial level

- state/central government policy makers (n=2, 3%);
- state/provincial ministries/agencies/institutions/departments (n=5, 7%);
- state level planners (n=1, 1%);
- central government personnel (n=1, 1%)
- provincial officials (n=2, 3%); and
- provincial administrators (n=1, 1%);

regional level

- regional government (n=1, 1%); and
- regional program directors (n=1, 1%);

district/local/municipal level

- district policy groups (n=1, 1%);
- district officials (n=1, 1%);
- district committee members (n=1, 1%);
- district level planners (n=2, 3%);
- district level administrators (n=1, 1%);
- local governments/units (n=3, 4%);
- local government officers (n=1, 1%);
- local authorities/political leaders/groups (n=2, 3%);
- municipal policy makers (n=1, 1%);
- municipal officials/personnel (n=3, 4%);
- municipal administrators (n=1, 1%); and
- city officials (n=2, 3%).

(Some PCRs describe more than one level or type of involvement).

Table 2 Level of Government Involvement

	Level	Numbers (%) of PCRs
Policy makers/groups	Any level	20 (27%)
	International	6 (8%)
	National/unspecified	14 (19%)
	State/central/provincial	2 (3%)
	District/local/ municipal	2(3%)
Governments/government ministries/ agencies/ institutions/departments/units	Any level	25 (33%)
	National/unspecified	17 (23%)
	State/central/provincial	5 (7%)
	Regional	1 (1%)
	District/local/ municipal	3 (4%)
Government officials/officers/representatives/ personnel	Any level	28 (37%)
	National/unspecified	23 (31%)
	State/central/provincial	3 (4%)
	District/local/ municipal	7 (9%)
Decision makers/authorities/committee members/ political leaders/groups/actors	Any level	13 (17%)
	International	3 (4%)
	National/unspecified	12 (16%)
	District/local/ municipal	3 (4%)
Planners/programme directors/ managers	Any level	4 (5%)
	National/unspecified	2 (3%)
	State/central/provincial	1 (1%)
	Regional	1 (1%)
	District/local/ municipal	2 (3%)
Administrators	Any level	3 (4%)
	National/unspecified	2 (3%)
	State/central/provincial	1 (1%)
	District/local/ municipal	2 (3%)
Total # of PCRs		75

(Some PCRs describe more than one level or type of involvement)

3.2 POLICY IMPACT, ACTUAL OR LIKELY

Policy impact was found to be of several natures in the PCRs selected for this review. Policy impact was described as:

(1) definitely having occurred (actual) in 33% of the PCRs (n=25);

Box 1: Examples of Actual Policy Impact

- results were used as inputs into educational system reform and the drafting of new regulations regarding social education spending (920415)
- new policies were formulated which allowed private companies to export rice, and supported rice purchase at harvest (928019)

(2) as possibly having occurred (possible actual) in 7% of the PCRs (n=5);

Box 2: Examples of Likely Policy Impact

- research results were expected to directly influence reform policies in education (000302)
- chances were "rather high" that at least some of the recommendations for reorientation of mandates within industry service agencies and the promotion of innovations in education and training progrmas for the industry would be addressed (911026)

(3) as being likely or expected to occur (likely) in 24% of the PCRs (n=18); and

Box 3: Examples of Potential Policy Impact

- steps taken toward improving the effectiveness of public law and policy (000195)
- the improved design, development and implementation of environmental policies (000010)

(4) as having the potential to occur (potential) in 41% of the PCRs (n=31).

A number of PCRs described policy impact of more than one nature, e.g., policy impact may be both actual and potential. In several PCRs, it was difficult to determine the nature of policy impact or policy impact was unclear or unstated.

TABLE 3 NATURE OF POLICY IMPACT

	Numbers (%) of PCRs
Actual	25 (33%)
Possible actual	5 (7%)
Likely	18 (24%)
Potential	31 (41%)
Unidentified	2 (3%)
Policy impact is unclear/unstated	4 (5%)
Total # of PCRs	75

(Some PCRs cite policy impact of more than 1 nature)

3.3 TYPES OF POLICY IMPACT CITED

The selected PCRs reported numerous types of policy impact:

- the capacity of researchers, research institutions and/or policy makers was significantly increased in 48% of the PCRs (n=36);

Box 4: Examples of Increases in Capacity

- capacity was gained by policy makers and researchers to design and implement local-oriented development programs and projects (920406)
- significant increases in the capacity to link research to utilization of results was noted for researchers and research institutions (000793)

- project results were used or to be used directly and indirectly as inputs into policy, programming, proposed legislation, and a policy document (in one case, research results led to a health intervention) in 44% of PCRs (n=33);

Box 5: Examples of Use of Project Results as Inputs into Policy

- ♦ employment policies related to the mining sector (911049)
- ♦ Egyptian food production/agriculture policy (880285)

- the technology developed/introduced may aid policy makers in policy formulation in 27% (n=20);

Box 6: Examples of Use of Technology to Aid Policy Formulation

- ♦ the decision-support management information system developed enables government departments at the national and regional level to better formulate relevant and effective policies for economic development (910136)
- ♦ the GIS information system will be used in microlevel planning by different levels of government (920611)

- the thinking and attitudes of policy makers were/may be changed in 11% (n=8);

Box 7: Examples of Changes in Thinking/Attitudes

- ♦ the awareness of policy makers was raised, concerning policy issues around migrancy and HIV/AIDS (911049)
- ♦ research results were the basis of discussions with policy makers on the appropriate use, and regulation of importation and quality assurance of health care technologies (002033)

- new policies were formulated or adopted in 9% (n=7);

Box 8: Examples of New Policies

- ♦ participating municipalities institutionalized planning processes, in some cases adopting new plans or policies (000347)
- ♦ Library Legislation of Bangladesh was formulated (000055)

- good/strong working relations were established/enhanced between researchers and policy makers, between researchers and government, and between national and international organizations in 7% (n=5)
- a policy or policy-oriented document report was produced in 3% (n=2);
- a change in focus of policies and programs occurred in 1% (n=1);
- linkages were strengthened between research, policy and action in 1% (n=1);
- new cooperation mechanisms were established between NGOs and the UN system in 1% (n=1); and
- communication was established between researchers and policy makers in 1% (n=1).

No policy impact was cited in 12% of the PCRs (n=9).

TABLE 4 TYPES OF POLICY IMPACT

	Numbers (%) of PCRs
Significant increases in capacity	36 (48%)
Use of research results as inputs into policies/programs/proposed legislation/policy documents	33 (44%)
Technology's ability to aid policy makers in policy formulation	20 (27%)
Changed attitudes and thinking of policy makers	8 (11%)
Formulation or adoption of new policy	7 (9%)
Establishing /strengthening of working relations	5 (7%)
Production of policy or policy-oriented documents/reports	2 (3%)
Change in focus of policies and programs	1 (1%)
Strengthening of linkages between research, policy and action	1 (1%)
Establishing of new cooperation mechanisms	1 (1%)
Establishing of communication between researchers and policy makers	1 (1%)
No policy impact cited	9 (12%)
Total # of PCRs	75

(These numbers contain all direct/implied references relating policy influence to this specific factor)

3.4 MECHANISMS/APPROACHES WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO POLICY INFLUENCE

The selected PCRs directly attribute policy influence to a number of mechanisms/approaches:

❑ *the nature/use of the technology developed or the technology itself (n=15, 20%)*:

Box 9: Examples of Use of Technology to Influence Policy

- *"Through the immediate access to information, the municipal governments are able to design their policies more adequately"* [#8d - 928759 Information System for Municipal Administration (Chile)].
- *"Through having access to REDTAM+ and GIS, decision makers will be able to finetune their policies in the future"* [#8d - 000023 REDTAM and GIS for Decision Support Systems Development in Africa].

❑ *the dissemination of results to policy makers/government officials (n=10, 13%); (this connection is also implied n=2):*

- some dissemination of research results to influence policy was undertaken but the effect is uncertain (n=1);

Box 10: Examples of Dissemination to Influence

- *"As part of the analysis carried out by FLASCO [Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales] qualitative information was disseminated to government authorities about the impact of social (education) spending. This assisted in the drafting of new regulations" (#1). "The impact of the results of this project had on educational policy in the country was to a large extent due to a well developed dissemination strategy implemented throughout the duration of the project"* [#16c - 920415 Secondary Education Policies (Argentina) - Phase III].
- *"The project likely also influenced international debate and action, as a result of the profile given to the project at fora such as the UN Conference on Human Settlements - Habitat II (1996), Rio + 5 (1996/97) and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (3rd session, 1995). This also likely helped facilitate the spread of LA21 initiatives and programs"* [#8g - 000347 Local Agenda 21 Inititative (Global)].

❑ *the involvement of policy makers in the project (n=8, 11%); (this connection is also implied n=2):*

- the involvement of research users in review of results and utilization, through links established between the researchers and policy makers (n=1);
- the involvement of policy makers was expected to contribute to policy influence but the effect is uncertain (n=1); and
- the involvement of researchers in all project facets seems to have contributed to policy influence, but policy makers are not mentioned (n=1).

Box 11: Examples of Policy Maker Involvement to Influence Policy

♦ *"This project was conceived with the practical application of radar to land management in mind. Since the Costa Rican government was involved in this project, it will be easier to use current and future radar data in the development of government policies and planning"* [#6d - 911039 Radar Remote Sensing Technology (Costa Rica)].

♦ *"Numerous government officials are members of the regional and national networks. The participation of bureaucrats in these networks is having an impact on the development of policy to promote AIR"* [#8d - 002948 Agroindustry Networks III (Latin America)].

❑ the establishing/strengthening of links:

- between researchers/research institutions/the research/NGOs and policy makers/government officials/government institutions/the UN system (n=6, 8%);
- the appointment of one of the researchers as finance minister resulted in policy influence (n=1);
- the involvement of PIs in the project who were well placed to influence policy (n=1);
- internships with institutions have led to a focus on policy in thesis research and consequently are expected to influence policy making (n=1);
- the connection between researchers and national authorities was expected to contribute to results utilization but this did not occur to the extent expected (n=1); and

- the involvement of research users in review of results and utilization, through links established between the researchers and policy makers (n=1; this example is also listed above under influence by policy makers' involvement).

Box 12: Examples of Establishing Links to Influence Policy

♦ *"Utilization [of results] is especially likely through the strong contacts that CIEPLAN has with key policy makers and through the informal sessions that they have with policy makers"* [#8a - 920402 Macroeconomic Behaviour (Chile)].

♦ *"The project was a model for the collaborative involvement of NGO and other grassroots groups in a process of consultation and policy development at the global level. NGONET made an impressive contribution to UNCED. It has been innovative in establishing new cooperation mechanisms between NGOs and the UN system (particularly the UNCED secretariate) and among NGOs. Some of NGONET's basic ideas are shared by the Agenda 21 document on "Information for Decision-Making"* [#8d - 910146 NGONET: An NGO Communications Support System for Environment and Development Information].

❑ *Other factors:*

- the novelty of the approach used (n=1);
- lobbying (n=1);
- project activities; and
- the development of sustainable training programs which contribute to health sector reform (n=1).

Additional mechanisms/approaches which may be related to policy influence but are unconfirmed by the PCRs include:

- the continued input of research users into the database developed (n=1);
- an emphasis on activities to turn research into policy (n=1);
- the conducting or related research after the project by researchers and research institutions, who followed up on research results and participated in policy discussions (n=1);
- the linking of the project with a complementary project (n=1);
- the strengthening of links between research and policy through an increase in capacity to link research to utilization of research results (n=1); and
- an increase in capacity to use the technology developed (n=1).

Mechanisms/approaches are not described in 7% of the PCRs (n=5).

TABLE 5 MECHANISMS/APPROACHES CONTRIBUTING TO POLICY INFLUENCE

	Number (%) of PCRs which attribute policy influence to the mechanism/ approach	Number (%) of PCRs in which mechanism/ approach is unconfirmed
Use/nature of the technology developed/project outputs	15 (20%)	6 (8%)
Dissemination of results to policy makers/government officials	13 (17%)	27 (36%)
Involvement of policy makers/ government officials in the project	13 (17%)*	42 (56%)
Establishing/strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions/the research and policy makers/government officials/ government institutions	11 (15%)	13 (17%)
Novelty of the approach used	1 (1%)	0
Lobbying	1 (1%)	0
Development of sustainable training programs	1 (1%)	0
Project activities	1 (1%)	0
Continued input of research users into the database developed	0	1 (1%)
Increase in capacity to use the technology developed	0	1 (1%)
Conducting of related research and follow-up by researchers	0	1 (1%)
Strengthening of links between research and policy through increase in capacity to link research to utilization of research results	0	1 (1%)
Linking of project with a complementary project	0	1 (1%)
Emphasis on activities to turn research into policy	0	1 (1%)
Mechanisms/approaches are unclear/not cited	5 (7%)	5 (7%)
Total # of PCRs	75	75

(These numbers contain all direct/implied references relating policy influence to these specific mechanisms/approaches. Some PCRs cite more than 1 mechanism/approach. * Includes case where involvement of researchers contributed to policy influence but policy makers are not mentioned).

3.5 FACTORS FACILITATING POLICY INFLUENCE

The selected PCRs directly attribute policy influence to a number of facilitating factors:

❑ *the involvement of policy makers/government officials:*

- the involvement of policy makers/government officials in the project (n=8, 11%); (2 PCRs also imply this connection);
- the involvement of research users in review of results and utilization, through links established between the researchers and policy makers (n=1, 1%);
- the involvement of policy makers was expected to contribute to policy influence but the effect is uncertain (n=1, 1%); and
- the involvement of the researchers in all project facets seems to have contributed to policy influence, but policy makers are not mentioned (n=1, 1%).

❑ *the establishing/strengthening of links*:

- between researchers/research institutions/the research/NGOs and policy makers/government officials/government institutions/the UN system (n=6, 8%);
- the appointment of one of the researchers as Finance Minister resulted in policy influence (n=1, 1%);
- the involvement of PIs in the project who were well placed to influence policy (n=1, 1%);
- internships with institutions have led to a focus on policy in thesis research and consequently are expected to influence policy making (n=1, 1%);
- the connection between researchers and national authorities was expected to contribute to results utilization but this did not occur to the extent expected (n=1, 1%); and
- the involvement of research users in review of results and utilization, through links established between the researchers and policy makers (this example is also listed above under influence by policy makers' involvement)(n=1, 1%).

Box 13: The Involvement of Well-Placed PIs

♦ *"The Pis have experienced the impact of their results based on discussions arising at international scientific meetings. Because of their high level positions in Ethiopian health institutions, they are very well positioned to use the results to influence policy and have in fact done so. The Ministry of Health have adopted policy to implement integrated interventions for anemia and malaria where the two problems are endemic"* [#6d - 000236 Micronutrient Supplementation and Malaria Risk (Canada/Ethiopia)]

❑ *factors pertaining to the project/research itself*:

- the relevance/usefulness of the research results/technology developed (n=4, 5%);
- the project's realistic analysis and concrete suggestions which were usable by policy makers (n=1, 1%);
- the credibility and accessibility of results (n=1, 1%);
- the comprehensive nature of the research (n=1, 1%);
- the importance of following up and disseminating project results (n=1, 1%); and
- the positioning of the project within a greater project (n=1, 1%).

Box 14: The Comprehensive Nature of the Research, and the Reputation of the Researchers

♦ *"By joining together long-run and short-run issues, the research should be able to eventually impact public policy. This probability is enhanced by the strong reputations of many of the researchers involved in the project"* [#8d - 921100 Fiscal Reform and Structural Change].

❑ *governmental/political factors*:

- the government's interest in increasing the technological competitiveness of SMEs (n=1, 1%);
- a favorable policy environment (n=1, 1%);
- the government's commitment to using the research results in policy formulation (n=1, 1%); and
- while project results were immediately relevant, policy influence may depend more on the government's agenda (n=1, 1%).

Box 15: Government's Commitment to Using the Results

♦ *"The Ministry of Land, Water and Environment is strongly committed to the translation of the research findings and recommendations into concrete policy"* [#8a - 002877 Preliminary Study on Water Tariff Policy for Rural Eritrea].

❑ *factors pertaining to the researchers/research institutions:*

- the research institution's ability to take an objective, long-term approach in its research (n=1, 1%);
- the reputation of the researchers (n=1, 1%); and
- a long-term perspective and commitment (n=1, 1%).

Box 16: The Ability to Take an Objective, Long-Term Approach

♦ *"By being able to take a more objective and longer-term view, the research done by CIEPLAN contributes significantly to the public policy debate in Chile"* [#8d - 920402 Macroeconomic Behaviour (Chile)]

❑ *external factors*:

- the sustained support of the project by IDRC allowed the research institution to develop its research capacity until it could influence policy (n=1, 1%).

Box 17: The Sustained Support of the Project by IDRC

♦ *"The success of this project was to a large extent the result of IDRC persistancy in working with and supporting FLACSO. This allowed the institution to develop a strong research capacity over time and reach a point at which it could actually have influence on national policy decision"* [#16k - 920415 Secondary Education Policies (Argentina) - Phase III]

The PCRs also describe numerous factors which may facilitate/may have facilitated policy influence but are unconfirmed in the PCRs, including:

- ❑ *factors pertaining to the project/research itself:*
  - the relevance of the project/research (n=2, 3%);
  - an emphasis on policy relevant research (n=2, 3%);
  - the project's methodology (n=1, 1%);
  - the nature of the research (n=1, 1%);
  - the quality of the presentation of research results (n=1, 1%);
  - the research being demand-driven/being undertaken in response to policy makers' requests (n=3, 4%);
  - the following-up and disseminating of results (n=1, 1%);
  - sustainability (n=2, 3%);

- ❑ *governmental/political factors:*
  - the support of the government (n=1, 1%);
  - the government's commitment to priorities addressed by the project (n=1, 1%);
  - a change in government policy (n=1, 1%);
  - the bringing together of government ministries (n=1, 1%);
  - the interest generated in the participating countries (n=1, 1%);
  - the country's membership in a regional body (n=1, 1%);

- ❑ *factors pertaining to the researchers/research institutions:*
  - the quality of the institutions involved (n=1, 1%);
  - the institutions involved being influential in public policy (n=1, 1%);

- ❑ *external factors:*
  - the continuity of IDRC involvement (n=1, 1%);
  - long-term support for research institutions (n=1, 1%);
  - the funding of organizations which help countries institute initiatives (n=1, 1%);

- ❑ *other facilitating factors:*
  - the timeliness of the research (n=6, 8% of the PCRs);
  - the strengthening of links between research and policy through an increase in capacity to link research to utilization of research results (n=1);
  - the continued input of research users into the database developed (n=1, 1%).

No facilitating factors are described in 12% of the PCRs (n=9), while factors are unclear in 1 PCR.

TABLE 6 FACTORS FACILITATING POLICY INFLUENCE

	Number (%) of PCRs which attribute policy influence to the factor	Number (%) of PCRs in which factor is unconfirmed
Involvement of policy makers/ government officials in the project	13 (17%)*	42 (56%)
Establishing/strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions/the research and policy makers/government officials/ government institutions	11 (15%)	13 (17%)
Factors pertaining to the project/research itself	9 (12%)	13 (17%)
Governmental/political factors	4 (5%)	6 (8%)
Factors pertaining to the researchers/research institutions	3 (4%)	2 (3%)
External factors	1 (1%)	3 (4%)
Other factors	0 (1%)	8 (11%)
Facilitating factors are unclear/not described	10 (13%)	10 (13%)
Total # of PCRs	75	75

(These numbers contain all direct/implied references relating policy influence to these specific mechanisms/approaches. Some PCRs cite more than 1 factor. * Includes case where involvement of researchers contributed to policy influence but policy makers are not mentioned).

3.6 FACTORS INHIBITING POLICY INFLUENCE

The selected PCRs directly relate the inhibiting of policy influence to a number of factors:

- ❑ *political factors/climate/agenda* (n=3, 4% of PCRs);
    - governmental factors: the problems associated with a two-tiered health care system, which make it difficult for research results to influence policy (n=1, 1%); and

- a weak institutional framework, an impediment to policy implementation (n=1, 1%).

Box 18: Political Factors

♦ *"The policy influence of the research findings may, however, have been limited by political factors" (#14). "Particularly in the early stages, the researchers were viewed with some suspicion by different political* groups. *This tended to lessen with the opening up of political processes and the movement towards national peace processes and elections in the country. Their findings may have remained controversial to some"* [#9 - 900087 Black Urbanization, Class Differentiation and Political Conflict (South Africa)].

❑ *project-related factors:*

- a failure to involve policy makers (n=1, 1%);
- the type of approach a project uses (n=1, 1%);
- the taking of a top-down approach an impediment to policy implementation (n=1, 1%); and
- limited dissemination of research results a result of the country's political situation and the failure to publish a final project report (n=1, 1%).

Box 19: The Project's Approach

♦ *"An issue raised by the external reviewer was whether the extent of international networking could not be increased by having researchers from different countries work together on different thematic topics or issues rather than having each team focus on a particular country study. There is something to be said for such an approach, but the cost could be a loss of policy impact at the national level"* [#16e - 000304 Labour Flexibility and Productivity].

Box 20: Limited Dissemination

♦ *"The research findings may have limited direct impact on public policy due to limited dissemination to government (in part, due to the country's difficult political context)"* (#8d). *"The rating of 'unsatisfactory' is given [for the recipient's technical management of the project] due to...the difficulty in obtaining the final technical reports, including a synthesis report (not prepared), from the University of Nairobi, whose project leader also declined to agree to publication of the final report, limiting prospects for dissemination of the research results"* [#12b - 921105 Urban Poverty and Survival Strategies (Kenya)].

❑ *linkage factors:*

- a lack of coordination with relevant government officials, an impediment to policy implementation (n=1, 1%).

❑ *external factors:*

- the defection of PhD trainees who were expected to take up senior positions in the Ministry of Health (n=1, 1%); and
- a lack of funding, which affected the success of the project, and kept the organization from taking a pro-active approach to involvement in the policy-making agenda (n=1, 1%).

Box 21: Lack of Funding

♦ *"If, in the future, the network could secure the faith of donors and obtain significant funding to establish itself as a credible organization, the opportunity would exist for it to take a much more pro-active approach in placing issues of importance on the policy-making agenda. The network would then be well-placed to effect policy on AIDS control in Africa in a positive and substantial way"* [#8d - 000381 Network of AIDS Researchers of Eastern and Southern Africa (NARESA)].

The PCRs also describe numerous factors which may inhibit/may have inhibited policy influence but are unconfirmed in the PCRs, including:

❑ *project-related factors*:

- a lack of data analysis (n=1, 1%);
- invalid data (n=1, 1%);
- an ineffectiveness in generating policy recommendations/ambiguity of research results in policy application (n=2, 3%);
- a failure to obtain, implement and disseminate research results (n=1, 1%);
- limited dissemination or a failure/delay in disseminating research results to policy makers (n=4, 5%);
- a failure to include beneficiaries, or the lack of involvement/interest of policy makers/government officials in the project (n=6, 8%);
- a failure to include government officials in the selection of research topics (n=1, 1%);
- a change in project focus (n=1, 1%);
- a project strategy that involves individuals rather than institutions (n=1, 1%);
- problems in project management (n=1, 1%); and

- the failure to establish committees for policy formulation (n=1, 1%);

❑ *researcher/ research institution-related factors*:
- technical and communication problems (n=1, 1%); and
- internal problems in the participating institutions (n=1, 1%);

❑ *capacity-related factors*:
- a lack of capacity at the municipal level (n=1, 1%);
- the failure to build capacity to maintain or use the technology (n=2, 3%); and
- the difficulty of maintaining the technology (n=1, 1%);

❑ *linkage factors*:
- weakened links with government ministries (n=1, 1%);
- gaps between researchers and policy makers (n=1, 1%); and
- failure to link research and utilization of results (n=1, 1%);

❑ *governmental/political factors*:
- a negative political climate/agenda (n=5, 7% of the PCRs);
- the institutional framework of the Central Bank (n=1, 1%);
- communication problems within the Ministry (n=1, 1%);
- a lack of coordination between divisions (n=1, 1%);
- existing government policies (n=1, 1%); and
- the negative impact of new legislation (n=1, 1%); and

❑ *external factors*:
- insufficient funding or the need for additional or long-term support (n=7, 9% of the PCRs);
- a natural disaster (n=1, 1%); and
- other external factors (n=1, 1%).

No inhibiting factors are discussed in 57% of the PCRs (n=43).

TABLE 7 FACTORS INHIBITING POLICY INFLUENCE

	Number (%) of PCRs which attribute policy influence to the factor	Number (%) of PCRs in which factor is unconfirmed
Governmental/political factors/climate/agenda	5 (7%)*	10 (13%)
Project-related factors	5 (7%)*	20 (27%)
External factors	2 (3%)	9 (12%)
Linkage factors	1 (1%)*	3 (4%)
Capacity-related factors	0	4 (5%)
Researcher/research institution-related factors	0	2 (3%)
No inhibiting factors cited	43 (57%)	43 (57%)
Total # of PCRs	75	75

(*Includes impediments to policy implementation)

4.0 GAPS IN INFORMATION ON RESEARCH INFLUENCE ON POLICY

Out of the 75 PCRs reviewed for this report, 74 have gaps in the information that may relate to policy influence. The types of gaps in information found in the PCRs include: research users/ultimate beneficiaries involved in the project are not identified or policy makers specifically mentioned in these groups; beneficiaries of research results dissemination or workshop/conference attendees are not identified; and policy influence mechanisms/approaches and factors are not cited or are unconfirmed.

The largest gaps in information occur in the attributing of policy influence to (or the inhibiting of policy influence by) specific mechanisms/approaches and factors; the majority of policy influence mechanisms/factors and approaches presented in this report are unconfirmed. Fifty-nine percent of all PCRs directly relate policy influence to a specific mechanism/approach, while 81% suggest mechanisms/approaches which may influence policy but the actual relationship is not confirmed in the PCR. Seven percent of all PCRs are unclear or do not cite any mechanisms/ approaches.

TABLE 8 PCRs And POLICY INFLUENCE MECHANISMS/APPROACHES

	Numbers (%) of PCRs
# of PCRs directly relating policy influence to specific mechanisms/ approaches	44 (59%)*
# of PCRs suggesting mechanisms/ approaches, but actual relation is unconfirmed	61 (81%)
# of PCRs which are unclear/do not cite any mechanisms/ approaches	5 (7%)
Total # of PCRs	75

(Individual PCRs may contain both confirmed and unconfirmed mechanisms/approaches. *Includes all direct/implied references relating policy influence to a specific mechanism/approach).

When it comes to directly relating policy influence to facilitating factors, PCRs are more likely to suggest factors which may facilitate policy influence, than directly relate the two: 75% of the PCRs suggest factors but do not confirm any relationship, while 37% directly relate or attribute the facilitation of policy influence to a specific factor. Thirteen percent of all PCRs were unclear or did not cite any facilitating factors.

TABLE 9 PCRS AND FACILITATING POLICY INFLUENCE FACTORS

	Number (%) of PCRs
# of PCRs directly relating policy influence to specific factors	28 (37%)*
# of PCRs suggesting factors, but actual relation is unconfirmed	56 (75%)
# of PCRs which are unclear/do not cite any factors	10 (13%)
Total # of PCRs	75

(Individual PCRs may contain both confirmed and unconfirmed factors. *Includes all direct/implied references relating policy influence to a specific factor).

PCRs were less likely to discuss factors inhibiting policy influence: 57% of the PCRs are unclear or do not cite any inhibiting factors. Only 15% of the PCRs directly relate the inhibiting of policy influence to specific factors, while 35% suggest factors which may inhibit policy influence, but do not confirm any actual relationship.

TABLE 10 PCRS AND POLICY INFLUENCE INHIBITING FACTORS

	Numbers (%) of PCRs
# of PCRs directly relating inhibiting of policy influence to specific factors	11 (15%)*
# of PCRs suggesting factors, but actual relation is unconfirmed	26 (35%)
# of PCRs which are unclear/do not cite any factors	43 (57%)
Total # of PCRs	75

(Individual PCRs may contain both confirmed and unconfirmed factors. *Includes all direct/implied references relating policy influence to a specific factor, and includes factors referring to policy implementation).

PCRs contain other gaps in information as well. Some PCR authors do not add comments; this is especially problematic when it comes to PCR Question 8d (referring to the project's expected significant, positive development impact on public policy): a few of the PCR authors have simply answered Yes without elaborating, so it is difficult to ascertain what they mean in these responses, i.e., if policy impact has already occurred or if it will occur. In a few other cases, the authors have made comments in response to this question which are unclear in terms of their relation to public policy. The problem these omissions and lack of clarity create when trying to determine the mechanisms/approaches which contributed to policy influence, and the factors which may have facilitated or inhibited policy influence cannot be overstated. The contribution of some mechanisms/ approaches and factors which may have played a role in policy influence may not be recognized as a result of these information gaps. Many reports, for example, do not identify research users, so it is difficult to determine if policy makers were involved in the project. The same is true of the dissemination of research results. Many reports simply state that conferences or workshops were held, and do not identify the attendees, so it is difficult to ascertain if policy makers received research results, and hence, to determine if this mechanism/approach may have played a role in policy influence.

A second consequence of the lack of specificity of PCRs is the inability to get a complete picture of what makes a project successful in terms of policy influence. The PCRs are useful in identifying some mechanisms/ approaches or factors which the PCRs describe as having policy influence, or factors which they say may have hindered policy influence, however, all of the mechanisms/factors involved in a particular case are impossible to determine because the PCR is not structured to provide this information; it is not designed for this purpose.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study of selected PCRs was undertaken to ascertain the information that could be gleaned from PCRs regarding policy influence. A majority of the selected PCRs (59%) were found to directly attribute policy influence to specific mechanisms/approaches. Fewer PCRs directly attributed the facilitating of policy influence by specific factors (37% of the PCRs), and an even smaller number of PCRs directly related the inhibiting of policy influence to specific factors (15%); the majority of factors were unconfirmed by the PCRs.

The involvement of policy makers/government officials in the project was the most common link reported between research and policy, followed by the dissemination of research results to policy makers, and the establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions and policy makers. Government involvement as participants in the projects, as recipients of dissemination of research results, and/or as participants in the links established through the project was most frequently reported at the national level (this category also includes unspecified levels); followed by the district, local and municipal levels; the state and provincial level; the international level; and lastly, the regional level. The involvement of government officials, officers, representatives or personnel in the projects was the most common level of involvement, followed closely by the involvement of governments and/or government ministries, agencies, institutions, departments or units. Twenty-seven percent of the PCRs reported the involvement of policy makers or policy groups, while the involvement of decision makers, authorities, committee members, and/or political leaders, groups or actors was less frequently reported, as was the involvement of planners, programme directors and/or managers; and the involvement of administrators.

Actual policy impact is reported in 33% of the selected PCRs, likely impact in 24%, and potential policy impact in 41% of the PCRs. The most frequent type of policy impact cited was a significant increase in capacity of researchers/research institutions. This was followed closely by the use of research results as inputs into policies/programs, etc. The aiding of policy makers in policy formulation by the use of an introduced or developed technology was cited in 27%of the PCRs.

Mechanisms/approaches described as contributing to policy influence include the use of the technology developed/introduced to aid policy makers in policy formulation, the involvement of policy makers in the research, the dissemination of research results to policy makers, and the establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/research institutions and policy makers. Factors found to facilitate policy influence include the involvement of policy makers in the project, the establishing or strengthening of links between researchers/ research institutions and policy makers, and a number of factors found in individual PCRs ranging from the usefulness of the research to the sustained support by IDRC. Factors found to inhibit policy influence range from political factors/climate/agenda to a project approach that focuses on a multi-country thematic topic rather than an individual country study, and a lack of funding.

The discerning of policy influence mechanisms/approaches and factors from PCRs is hindered by the gaps in information found in many PCRs. While a complete picture of the extent to which and the ways in which Centre-supported research has influenced public policy cannot be obtained from a review of PCRs due to the lack of specificity of PCRs, PCRs do provide useful information on the mechanisms/approaches and factors which impact on policy influence. An analysis of the various policy influence mechanisms/approaches and factors cited in the PCRs in relation to the nature of the impact (i.e., actual, likely or potential) may also be useful, but was beyond the scope of this review.

The variety of mechanisms/approaches used, and the diversity of facilitating and inhibiting factors affecting policy influence, both directly stated and suggested by the PCRs which were a part of this review, reveal the complexity of the public policy influence issue. A change in the design of the PCRs to include more specific questions in terms of policy influence can only aid in increasing knowledge of the effecting of policy influence, which should lead in the future to the design of more efficacious interventions.